



County of San Diego - Parks and Open Space Program
Contributing to the County of San Diego Strategic Plan Environment Initiative
***"Promote natural resource management strategies that ensure environmental preservation,
quality of life, and economic development"***

**White House Conference on
Cooperative Conservation**

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Protecting Valuable Resources Through Effective Planning: *Watershed Management Plans*

San Diego County staff has recently completed Watershed Management Plans for the San Diego River, the Santa Margarita River and the Tijuana River watersheds. The development of these comprehensive plans included developing watershed management workgroups, stakeholder databases, watershed resources inventories, watershed analyses and management goals, and strategies and activities.

The three plans were partially prepared under grants administered by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board and issued under the Costa-Machada Water Act of 2000 (Proposition 13). Proposition 13 was approved by California voters to provide funds to assist in implementing watershed plans to protect watersheds through better integration of planning and science. The grants were approximately \$200,000 each, with matching funds of \$200,000 plus staff time and effort over three years from the County's General Fund.

The Watershed Management Plans will continue to be "living" documents. Some of the recommended activities listed in the Watershed Management Plans are currently being implemented or are planned for implementation. For example, in the San Diego River watershed current restoration efforts include the removal of exotic species. Also, education and outreach to farmers, large nurseries and other agricultural operations are anticipated to be conducted in order to assist in the lowering of nitrates found in the Rainbow Creek portion of the Santa Margarita watershed.

The boundaries of a watershed cross the boundaries of many organizations and regions, so working relationships have been developed with 55 agencies including the Marine Corps base Camp Pendleton, City of Temecula, County of Riverside Flood Control and Conservation District, Mission Resource Conservation District, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, SDSU Field Station Program, US Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Fish and Game, National Parks Conservancy, and the Coastal Conservancy.

At its annual awards dinner on September 29, 2005 at the Birch Aquarium at Scripps, the San Diego Chapter of the Association of Environmental Professionals (AEP) bestowed Certificates of Merit to two of the County of San Diego for the County Watershed Planning Program's projects. The *Binational Vision for the Tijuana River Watershed* was a finalist for 2005 Best Environmental Solution and *The San Diego River Watershed Management Plan* was a finalist for 2005 Best Environmental Resource Document. Congratulations to Joe DeStefano, Liz Giffen, Kelly Barker of the County Watershed Program and Lennie Rae Cooke and Katherine Comer of Anchor Environmental for their hard work on both projects.

More information regarding the Watershed Management Plans and current watershed projects is available at:

www.santamargaritaproject.org
www.projectcleanwater.org
<http://trw.sdsu.edu/English/homeFrame.htm>



The Santa Margarita River watershed comprises resources of enormous regional significance.

Photo Courtesy of SDSU Field Station, SMER.

Why a Watershed Management Plan? *The Santa Margarita River*

The Santa Margarita River is a complex physical system with attributes that are of significant interest to a wide variety of stakeholders. It is one of the largest and finest examples of a riparian system draining the southern California coastal plain. Its watershed encompasses about 750 square miles in northern San Diego County and western Riverside county. The river is formed by the joining of two large creeks: the Temecula Creek, which flows out of the Palomar Mountains westward and meets Murrieta Creek, which drains the Santa Ana Mountains to the north. The main stem of the river flows for 27 miles from the confluence of these two creeks near the city of Temecula through a rugged gorge, chaparral-covered hills, riparian woodlands and sandy plains to the ocean.

The physical features of the river's floodplain and estuary supports the largest populations of seven federal or state-listed endangered species. The estuary is home to the largest nesting populations of California least tern and the largest known concentrations of the Least Bell's vireos nest in the scrubby willows. The Light footed clapper rail nest in the tidal marshes and Belding's savannah sparrows inhabit the pickleweed marsh. In addition to endangered animals, the Santa Margarita hosts a large diversity of migratory shorebirds, waterfowl, and small passerine songbirds. Mountain lions use the corridor to travel between the Santa Ana Mountains on the coast and the Cleveland National Forest. The floodplain exhibits a full range of riparian forest types from low scrubby willow along scour channels to full gallery forest of sycamore and alder to the higher terraces covered with oaks. This mix of habitat and the biodiversity of bird life it supports are unequalled. From Los Angeles to the international border, the Santa Margarita is the last of its kind.

Agriculture, residential, commercial, and industrial development have impacted the Santa Margarita River Watershed and caused erosion, sedimentation, nutrient enrichment, flooding and an overdrawn aquifer. Despite these conditions, the watershed is the least disturbed along the southern Californian coast.

There is a growing concern about a decline in the quality of drinking water and the sustainability of the local water supply for human and ecological use. The Santa Margarita Watershed presents an important challenge to state and local interests to protect human flood safety, water quality, water supply, and the irreplaceable downstream habitats while respecting property rights and encouraging development and economic stimulus upstream.

Why a Watershed Plan?

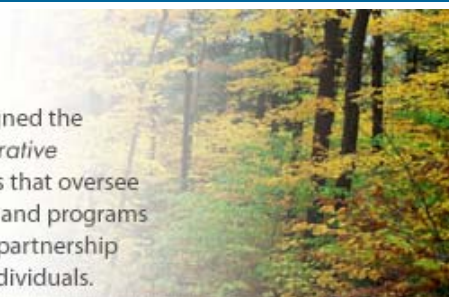
More than 55 institutions or organizations and five cities have jurisdiction over the Santa Margarita River Watershed. Over the years, these agencies, municipalities and organizations have made independent decisions on environmental, land-use and water quality issues. Often, these decisions are made with limited communication between the decision-makers and those doing scientific research in the watershed. There is a critical need for the development of tools for information management, public education, research management and habitat and corridor assessment.

Use of physical geologic and hydrologic boundaries, rather than political boundaries, provides numerous benefits for planning and management of water resources. A watershed management plan provides the framework for protecting watershed health and encouraging economic growth through strategies for managing flood safety, water supply, water quality, and habitat. The plan will assist all levels of watershed decision makers: from the County Supervisors making land use decisions to the water districts planning infrastructure and from the property owners evaluating management practices to the environmental or conservation organizations planning research and projects.



About the Conference

In August 2004 President George W. Bush signed the Executive Order titled *Facilitation of Cooperative Conservation* which directs Federal agencies that oversee environmental and natural resource policies and programs to promote cooperative conservation in full partnership with states, local governments, tribes and individuals.



The Future of Conservation Hinges on Cooperation

County MSCP Chief Tom Oberbauer attended the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation on August 29th through the 31st in St. Louis Missouri. The Conference represents the federal government's response to the Executive Order signed by President George W. Bush in order to promote cooperative conservation between Federal agencies, states, local governments, tribes and individuals. Over 1,000 professionals from ranching and hunting organizations, government agencies, environmental groups, tribal leaders, and logging and chemical companies were in attendance. The three-day event included presentations by Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, Chairman of Environmental quality James Connaughton, Secretary of Department of Agriculture Michael Johanns, EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

The conference opened with an inspiring description of "cooperative conservation" and what it entails by Secretary Norton. She promoted the "4 C's" of conservation: Conversation, Consultation, and Cooperation in service in Conservation, to emphasize the importance of interaction between agencies in the pursuit of a more efficient means for conservation efforts. Other keynote speakers such as Secretary Rumsfeld and Mr. Connaughton spoke of their efforts to coordinate voluntary conservation as an alternative to forced concession through regulation. Secretary Johanns spoke of a new market-based Environmental Stewardship Coordination Council that would provide incentives to create partnerships for successful cooperative conservation efforts.

In addition to these visionary speeches, various case studies were presented to provide tangible examples of how cooperative conservation actually worked. Several examples included tribal cooperation with governmental agencies, game wildlife, and a multiple species plan for the Lower Colorado River in California similar to the San Diego MSCP. San Diego's cooperative conservation efforts were nationally recognized in the appendix of a guidebook that was presented to each participant at the conference. A common theme among the numerous presentations and discussions is the need for a Cooperative Conservation Act that would address the information and ideas discussed at the conference. This is surely something to look forward to in the future.

To view the Executive Order, please visit: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/08/20040826-11.html>

Conference Purpose:

Strengthen Shared Governance and Citizen Stewardship

- ★ Broaden cooperative conservation with state, tribal and local governments, communities, private for profit and non-profit organizations, and private citizens
- ★ Enhance and integrate public and private land stewardship
- ★ Bring together key stakeholders and decision makers who can advance cooperative conservation
- ★ Identify ideas for future conservation and environmental policies and initiatives
- ★ Facilitate the exchange of information and advice for successful partnerships
- ★ Institutionalize cooperative conservation to enhance on-the-ground conservation results and progress

Key Conference Outcomes:

- ★ Expand state, tribal, and local communities' role in cooperative conservation
- ★ Ensure cooperative approach to use of public lands
- ★ Measure and monitor results of cooperative conservation
- ★ Encourage and reward leadership, innovation and technology
- ★ Improve certainty and incentives for stakeholders
- ★ Accelerate cooperative conservation as a way of doing business



Trails Enthusiasts Give Back to Community While Riding: Emerging Trend of Patrol Volunteer Programs

*Submitted by the County of San Diego
Department of Parks and Recreation*

more than 40,000 acres. These facilities are open year round and are operated and maintained by County staff, volunteers, and service contracts. One core group that allows San Diego County to offer these extensive trail opportunities is the volunteer patrols. Volunteer patrols are a vital component in managing parks, open space and non-motorized trails.

Volunteer patrol programs afford individuals and groups the opportunity to combine their love for riding with giving back to the community.

Volunteer patrols assist ranger staff by being the eyes and ears on the trails in existing facilities. Encountering the public, patrol teams often provide park information, give directions, communicate safety rules, and lend assistance in emergency situations. Patrol teams also provide progress reports to the rangers regarding trail conditions, safety issues, suspicious or illegal activity and any other input from trail users.

Training, supplies and "park perks" are often provided to the volunteer patrols members. Some agencies may require both horses and riders to pass a safety test. Most require a background check and CPR and/or first aid certification. There is often a time commitment requirement. Patrol volunteers are often granted access to developing preserves and trails before they are available to the general public. Benefits can be varied, from free access to day use parking, access to agency credit unions and skill enhancing classes, and worker's compensation. The real benefit, though, is the tremendous contribution one gets from supporting a park or open space facility that you love to ride in. It's a great way to exercise and revel in the great outdoors while giving back to your community.

Since the 2003 wildfires, San Diego County has worked diligently to restore damaged parks and rehabilitate trails. All but one of the 23 damaged county facilities has reopened and patrol volunteers are greatly needed once again. In addition, San Diego County has many new open space preserves poised to open, and volunteers are needed to patrol these lands during and after the assessment process.

Also, in January of this year the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the County Trails Master plan, which focuses on connectivity and includes trails plans of eighteen unincorporated communities throughout the County of San Diego. This plan is the blueprint for an ambitious trails network that will connect neighborhoods, communities, and public park and preserve facilities ranging from the coast to the desert. As trails are added to the overall inventory, there will be an even greater need for volunteer patrol partners. Now is an exciting time to participate in a piece of trail history by volunteering as a patrol volunteer.

Riders interested in combining a passion for trails with a desire to give back to the community by being a volunteer should contact their local city, county, state or forest agency. For patrol volunteer opportunities in San Diego County please visit www.sdparks.org or contact volunteer coordinator, Cheryl Wegner at (858) 694-3042 or cheryl.wegner@sdcounty.ca.gov. Santa Ysabel Ranch is an open space preserve in the foothills of San Diego County, just south of Volcan Mountain, that is preparing to open to the public in the near future. Volunteer patrols are being recruited for that site now. It's a fantastic place that any trail enthusiast will want to experience.



COUNTY INITIATES FARMING PROGRAM

*The County, San Diego Farm Bureau and American Farmland Trust
Will Work Together to Cultivate Innovative Program*



Agriculture & Natural Resources
University of California

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
San Diego County



On May 11, 2005, the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors approved a policy to support and encourage farming in San Diego County (Policy I-133). The development of the Farming Program Plan: *Farming in an Urban County* is a direct result of the adopted policy. The American Farmland Trust (AFT) – a private, nonprofit farmland conservation organization, that has more than 23 years of experience protecting farms and ranches, the San Diego Farm Bureau and U.C. Cooperative Extension/Farm and Home Advisors have formed a partnership with the County to develop the Farming Plan.

Although San Diego is known as an “urban” county, farming in San Diego County covers 265,041 acres and ranks 5th as a component of San Diego County's economy, 8th in counties in the state and ranks as the 12th largest farm economy among all counties in the nation. This model Farming Plan will showcase how unique San Diego County farms are and will provide recommendations to promote and encourage viable farming in the County.

A series of public outreach meetings have been scheduled to provide the public with an opportunity to provide their input and recommendations on the goals and objectives for the Farming Plan which may include:

- ★ Support for more federal funding for farming conservation programs in the Farm Bill
- ★ Simplification of the regulatory process for farmers
- ★ Provision of economic incentives for farmers to restore, enhance, or create habitat for sensitive species on farmlands
- ★ Development of programs to encourage the continuance of farming in the County
- ★ Design of pest exclusion and pest detection efforts to minimize the economic damage caused by quarantines and treatment protocols required for new and exotic pests

The schedule of public meetings is as follows:

Tues., October 11th 2005

7:00 — 9:00 pm

Live Oak Elementary School - Auditorium
1978 Reche Road
Fallbrook, CA 92028

Wed., October 12th 2005

7:00 — 9:00 pm

Ramona Community Center
434 Aqua Lane
Ramona, CA 92065

Thurs., October 13th 2005

7:00 — 9:00 pm

Valley Center Middle School -
Multi-Purpose Room
28102 North Lake Wohlford Rd.
Valley Center, CA 92082

If you are not able to attend the meetings, but are interested in finding out more about the County of San Diego Farming Program Plan, please contact Cheryl Monzon, Land Use/Environmental Planner at (858) 694-2964 or by e-mail at Cheryl.Monzon@sdcounty.ca.gov.

To learn more about the American Farmland Trust, please visit their webpage at www.farmland.org





Invaluable Workers: Meet Our MSCP Student Interns

Two students currently work with the MSCP Division, Meghan Kelly and Rick Sakow. Meghan is a senior at UCSD studying Environmental Systems and Urban Studies. She will be leaving for the fall to participate in a tropical biology conservation program in Costa Rica where she will live at the Monteverde Rainforest Institute for three months and complete a research project that will be presented to local biologists at a Symposium in San Jose, the Capitol of Costa Rica.

She grew up in Palm Desert, CA and moved to San Diego three years ago. This year, she is the captain of the UCSD Women's Crew team, currently ranked 5th in the nation. Besides working at the County, Meghan is also a vendor for EcoForm at the Home Depot. A family business, EcoForm manufactures plastic-coated engineered lumber that can be used as garden edging and concrete formwork. Her father came up with the idea of making reusable lumber after 30 years of construction work, thus inspiring her interest in sustainable development.



Rick grew up in San Diego and began working for the County in high school for a summer internship with the Department of Environmental Health, Land Water Quality Division and later, the Department of Public Works, Watershed Protection Program. He has assisted in testing water quality in nearly all of San Diego County's watersheds and has participated in numerous presentations to schools, businesses and the general public to spread awareness of storm drain pollution. Rick is a transfer student at San Diego City College, majoring in Environmental Systems and Ecology. He is interested in radio broadcasting and is an intern for the KPBS Radio Reading Service, a program that broadcasts periodicals over a sub-channel radio to the visually and physically disabled.

Both students have had opportunities to travel. Rick spent seven weeks backpacking in Eastern Europe and Turkey over the summer and studied abroad in Cannes, France in 2004. Likewise, Meghan spent the summer touring Europe, which inspired her to visit more countries in Eastern Europe, China and Australia, possibly next summer. Rick hopes to work in Cape Town, South Africa and visit Southeast Asia.

The MSCP student workers are provided with opportunities and experiences that will help them progress their careers in the environmental field.

**Coming Next Month:
Status of County of San
Diego North and East
County MSCP Plans**

**County of San Diego
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Department of Parks and Recreation
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